

VZCZCXRO8308  
PP RUEHLMC  
DE RUEHLP #3120/01 3322301  
ZNY CCCCC ZZH  
P 282301Z NOV 07  
FM AMEMBASSY LA PAZ  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5794  
INFO RUEHAC/AMEMBASSY ASUNCION 7342  
RUEHBO/AMEMBASSY BOGOTA 4710  
RUEHBR/AMEMBASSY BRASILIA 8618  
RUEHBU/AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES 5845  
RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS 3062  
RUEHGE/AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN 0472  
RUEHPE/AMEMBASSY LIMA 3262  
RUEHMD/AMEMBASSY MADRID 3708  
RUEHMN/AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO 5048  
RUEHPO/AMEMBASSY PARAMARIBO 0170  
RUEHQT/AMEMBASSY QUITO 5700  
RUEHSG/AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO 0307  
RUEHUB/USINT HAVANA 0730  
RHMFISS/HQ USSOUTHCOM MIAMI FL  
RUMIAAA/USCINCSO MIAMI FL  
RUEHLMC/MILLENNIUM CHALLENGE CORP  
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHINGTON DC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 LA PAZ 003120

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 11/28/2017

TAGS: [ASEC](#) [BL](#) [ECON](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#)

SUBJECT: SANTA CRUZ OPPOSITION: PACIFIST MEASURES FIRST

REF: LA PAZ 3078

Classified By: EcoPol Chief Mike Hammer for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

-----  
SUMMARY

11. (C) During separate meetings with the president of the Santa Cruz Civic Committee, the secretary general of the Santa Cruz prefectural government, and the president of the Santa Cruz Business Federation (CAINCO), all expressed their intention to encourage peaceful means of protest against the draft MAS constitution and the cut in the prefectural budget.

All were pessimistic that peaceful measures would be successful in pressuring the government to reinitiate a dialogue and believe Evo Morales is prepared to push forward with his "illegal" constitution even if it leads to violent confrontation. If violence were to break out in Santa Cruz all agreed that it would be extremely difficult to contain. In the meantime, Santa Cruz opposition leaders are quietly sending their families overseas due to fears that they may be targeted by the MAS. End Summary.

-----  
CIVIC COMMITTEE

12. (C) Emboffs met with Branco Marinkovic, President of the Santa Cruz Civic Committee, on November 26. Marinkovic said the demand of the six opposition departments (Santa Cruz, Tarija, Beni, Pando, Cochabamba, and Chuquisaca) is that the national government repudiate the "illegal" MAS-drafted-constitution that was approved on November 24 and that the constituent assembly reconvene following rules agreed upon by all sides. Marinkovic acknowledged that there is practically zero possibility that Evo will meet their demand because of his "winner take all attitude." Marinkovic expressed frustration at the lack of international reaction to "undemocratic" events in Bolivia and said he is working to "internationalize" the problem. In fact, Marinkovic and the opposition prefects are hoping to travel to Washington for a meeting with OAS SYG Insulza on December 4. He is worried

that Evo is determined "to push things to the point of confrontation" and is trying his best to keep Santa Cruz calm. One measure to buy time is the introduction of the "Autonomous Letter" which would be drafted by a committee and eventually be put to a departmental referendum for approval. He said the "Autonomous Letter" process would be deliberately slow so as to keep the peace but at the same time pressure the central government "to come to a pact." The opposition, Marinkovic said, is willing to negotiate on almost anything except reelection.

13. (C) Finally, Marinkovic said that he and Santa Cruz Prefect Ruben Costas are in close contact with the National Police and have been promised the police would not "go against" the public. The National Police have also reportedly told Marinkovic and Costas that they will guard the Palmasola jail and not release convicts as happened in Sucre if violence were to break out in Santa Cruz. On a personal level, Branko told Emboffs that he is fearful for his family's safety and is making plans to send them out of the country.

-----  
PREFECTURAL GOVERNMENT  
-----

14. (C) Santa Cruz Secretary General Roly Aguilera told Emboffs on November 27 that the November 28 general strike in six of the nine departments was a "heads up" to Evo. Aguilera said that the opposition will first "exhaust all means of peaceful resistance" before becoming radical. "Unlike Vice President Garcia Linera, we have never called on

LA PAZ 00003120 002 OF 002

our people to take up arms" said Aguilera. Aguilera is pessimistic that Evo will back track on the MAS constitution as he believes "they have measured the consequences of their actions and are prepared to push ahead no matter what." Aguilera mentions that Prefect Ruben Costas has already sent his son out of Bolivia because of personal safety concerns.

-----  
BUSINESS FEDERATION  
-----

15. (C) Santa Cruz Business Federation (CAINCO) President Gabriel Dabdoub said the opposition continues to reach out to the departments of Potosi, Oruro, and La Paz and that they have made substantial inroads with Potosi. Dabdoub said CAINCO has strong relations with Potosi Mayor Rene Joaquin and that an opposition led Civic Committee of Potosi was being created. Dabdoub explained that the violence and chaos in Sucre has actually helped push Potosi, Sucre's neighbor, towards the opposition camp. Given the current climate however, Dabdoub is taking no chances and has already sent his oldest son and wife to the States and will send his other two sons shortly. He also uses a bodyguard when traveling outside of the opposition departments.

-----  
COMMENT  
-----

16. (C) If the general strike on November 28 and other pacifist measures do not bring Evo to the bargaining table, the opposition may feel obligated to take more radical action. While the opposition professes its willingness to make a deal, it appears both sides are primed for a violent confrontation. End Comment.  
GOLDBERG